

controller to the local controllers in a unidirectional string or loop. Thus, each of the claims 1, 13 and 24 recites a host controller having “a data out terminal” and plural local controllers, each of which has “a data in terminal and a data out terminal”, interconnected in a string with “the data out terminal of the host controller being connected to the data in terminal of a first local controller and the data in terminal of each of the other local controllers [or nodes] being connected to the data out terminal of the preceding local controller [or node] in the string. Claim 31 recites “connecting the local controllers in series with one another and with a data out terminal of a host controller so that the local controllers cooperate to define an “MxN-bit shift register.” No such arrangement is disclosed or suggested by Wells.

Wells discloses a system in which a plurality of gaming devices 22 are connected to a host 24 in a loop via communication links 28. However, in the Wells system, communication along the links 28 is bidirectional or duplex (see paragraphs 49, 52 and 53). While each of the gaming devices 22 includes a transmitter 48 and a receiver 50 (Fig. 3) each of the transmitter and receiver can be connected to either one of the connection ports 32 and 34 of the associated device 22. Thus, none of the gaming devices 22 of Wells is provided with a “data out terminal” or a “data in terminal” as required by applicants’ claims, since data can go in either direction through each terminal or port 32, 34.

Claim 1 additionally requires “a power line interconnecting the power terminals of the host controller and all of the local controllers and all of the local controllers; and a common line interconnecting the common terminals of the host controller and all of the local controllers.” Wells does not disclose such an arrangement. There is no suggestion of power being transmitted along the Wells communication links 28.

Furthermore, there is no suggestion in Wells of the local controllers cooperating to define a shift register (inherently a one-way device) as required by applicants' claims 13, 24 and 31.

Also, each of the rejected claims requires that each local controller or node be connected to a plurality of devices which can be individually controlled by communications along the series string from the host through the several local controllers. This arrangement is not disclosed or suggested by Wells.

Furthermore, each of claims 13, 24 and 31 specifies a particular "serial digital data" stream or message including "MxN bits" respectively corresponding to the devices being controlled. Again, this particular communication pattern is not disclosed or suggested by Wells.

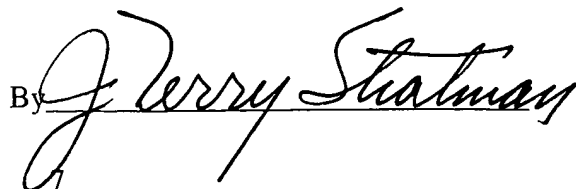
For all the foregoing reasons, it is believed that claims 1-36 patentably distinguish from Wells and, accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the rejection of those claims be reconsidered and withdrawn.

It is also noted that Wells is commonly owned with the subject application, and was so commonly owned at the time of applicants' invention.

Filed herewith is a Letter to the Drawing Review Branch, submitting copies of Figs. 3, 6 and 7, indicating in red proposed corrections of inadvertent errors in the drawings, so that the drawings will properly correspond with the written description. Approval of these drawing changes is respectfully asked.

Respectfully submitted,

Seyfarth Shaw
Attorneys for Assignee
55 East Monroe Street, Suite 4200
Chicago, Illinois 60603-5803
312-346-8000

By 

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Referring to FIG. 1, there is illustrated a system, generally designated by the numeral 10, for controlling access to a plurality of devices with a minimum number of wires or lines. The system 10 may be embodied in a gaming machine, which includes a gaming machine processor 11 for controlling all of the basic functions of the gaming machine in a known manner. The system 10 also includes a host controller 12 configured to provide a V+ voltage level at an output terminal connected to a V+ line 13, and also having a COMMON terminal connected to a common line 14. The controller 12 generates data signals at a DATA OUT terminal connected to a DATA line 15 and is adapted to receive incoming data via a RETURN line 16 at a DATA IN terminal. The host controller 12 is configured to control access to a plurality of devices 30, which may be of various types, and which are grouped together in nodes 20, which are connected in a string to the [first] host controller 12. There may be any number of nodes 20, depending upon the application. In the illustrated embodiment only the first two (nodes 0 and 1) and the last two (nodes N-1 and N) are illustrated. The nodes 20 may all be of substantially the same construction.

Paragraph bridging pages 5 and 6

Further details of the node 20 are illustrated in FIG. 3. The microcontroller 21 is an 8-pin device, which may be a 12C508 or 12C509, the pins 2, 3, 7 and 8 respectively corresponding to the device terminals 24-27. The node 20 includes a power supply 36 coupled to the V+ line 13 for providing a VCC voltage to the micro controller 21 at its VCC terminal 22 (pin 1). Pin [8] 6 is the COMMON terminal 23 connected to the COMMON line 14. The node has a DATA IN terminal 28 connected through a resistor to pin 4, and pin 5 is connected through a resistor to a DATA OUT terminal 29. The device pins 2, 7, 8 and 3 are, respectively, connected through

resisters to transistor drivers 37 which are, in turn, connected through resisters 41 to the device terminals 24-27 which are, respectively, connectable to devices to be accessed. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 3, the devices are LEDs 40, the device terminals 24-27 being respectively connected to the cathodes of the LEDs, their anodes being connected to the V+ line 13. The node 20 is provided with 4-pin input and output connectors 38 and 39. Each connector 38 and 39 is connected to the V+ line 13, the COMMON or ground line 14 and the RETURN line 16. The fourth pin of the input connector 38 is connected to the DATA IN terminal 28, while the fourth pin of the output connector 39 is connected to the DATA OUT terminal 29.

Paragraph bridging pages 6 and 7

In order to access the devices 30, the host controller 12 generates at its DATA OUT terminal and transmits to all of the nodes 20 a serial data signal, generally designated 50 and illustrated in FIG. 4, which includes four bits 52 of data for each node in the string. Thus, for example, if there were eight nodes, the data signal 50 would include 32 bits of information, followed by a strobe indicator 51, which may be a low level persisting for a pre-determined time period. In the illustrated embodiment the host controller 12 may have an 8-bit data bus, so the data bits 52 are arranged in 8-bit bytes 53, with each byte addressing two consecutive nodes in the string, i.e., an even-numbered node and an odd-numbered node. It will be appreciated that, when the nodes 20 are connected together in the manner illustrated in FIG. 1, the shift registers 35 of the several nodes cooperate to form a [systems] system shift register 55 of length MxN, where N is the number of nodes in the string and M is the number of devices 30 connected to each node.

First full paragraph on page 8

Referring to FIG. 6, there is illustrated an alternative embodiment of a node, designated 20A, configured for connection to a device 30 having states to be detected or monitored, such as

an illuminated manual switch 70. In the illustrated embodiment the switch 70 includes a switch element 71, which may be a single-pole, double-throw switch, the movable contact of which is connected to one of the device terminals 24 and through a resistor 72 to the microcontroller 21 and, through a resistor 73, to the VCC supply voltage. One of the fixed contacts of the switch is connected to the COMMON terminal 23, while the other is disconnected. The switch 70 includes three LEDs (not shown), which are respectively connected to the other three device terminals 25-27 through three of the pins of a 4-pin connector 74, the fourth pin of which is connected to the COMMON terminal 23 (COMMON line 13). The LEDs 40 may have different colors, such as blue, green, and red, or may be of the same color.

Two full paragraphs on page 9

Referring to FIG. 7, there is illustrated another node embodiment 20B, which is similar to the node embodiment 20A of FIG. 6, except in this case the accessed devices of the node include an illuminated switch 75 having a switch element 76 and a single lamp[77]. In this case, the VCC supply voltage is connected to one of the fixed contacts of the switch element 76. The lamp (not shown) is connected to a 2-pin connector 77, one pin of which is connected to the V+ line 13, and the other pin of which is connected to a driver circuit 78, which is in turn connected to two of the device pins 7 and 8, of the microcontroller 21, the fourth device pin [three] 3 being disconnected. The node 20B operates [on] in substantially the same manner as described for the node 20A.

When any of the nodes in the system 10 is connected to a device having states which must be sensed or monitored, such as the switches 70 or 75 illustrated in FIGS. 6 and 7, those states must be communicated back to the host controller 12 along the RETURN line 16. For this purpose, the DATA OUT pin of the output connector 39 of the node zero (the last node in the string) is connected to its RETURN pin by a jumper 80 (see FIGS. 1, 6 and 7). This jumper is

illustrated in FIGS. [3] 1, 6 and 7 to show its position, but it will be appreciated that it will be used only if that node happens to be the node 0, i.e., the last in a string or the [further] furthest from the host controller 12. It will also be appreciated that, if any node has a device with states which must be sensed, the jumper 80 must be utilized in node 0 to complete a return path to the host controller 12.

Paragraph bridging pages 9 and 10

It can be seen that, with the foregoing arrangement, no more than four lines are required to control access to the plurality of devices in the gaming machine. Indeed, if all of the nodes are of the type illustrated in FIG. 3, wherein all four of the devices of the node are LEDs 40 or some other device of the type having states to be controlled, but not requiring any sensing or monitoring of the states, only three lines are required, and, therefore, the [jumpers] jumper 80 would not be connected.

Paragraph bridging pages 10 and 11

While the foregoing description has related to the control of devices such as LEDs and illuminated switches, the basic principles of the invention could be applied to control of any of a large number of dual-state devices. Also, while the apparatus has particular application to control of access to large numbers of devices, it could be utilized for control of any number of devices. While the apparatus has been described in the context of control of a number of devices in a single location, such as a gaming machine, the principles described above would also be applicable to control of a number of devices at distributed locations.